The Unschooled Prophet (S.A.W.)

By Allama Murtaza Mutahhari

Chapter I.
The event of Hudaybiyyah
Since
Chapter II.
The Adversaries Accusation
Chapter III.
Conclusion

ProphetTaken fromThe Un-schooled Prophet
By Allama Murtaza Mutahhari

Chapter I.

The event of Hudaybiyyah

In the life-history of the Prophet (PBUH&HF), there are events which bring to light the fact that even while in Madinah, the Prophet (PBUH&HF)) did not read or write.
Among all such events, the event of Huday- biyyah is the best known, for it is of particular historical significance.
Historical accounts and ahadith, while in conflict, help to some extent, to explain the question.
In the month of Dhu al-Qa'dah, the sixth year after Hijrah, the Prophet (PBUH&HF) left Madinah for Makkah to perform 'Umrah and Hajj.
He ordered that the camels for sacrifice be marked and be led along.
However, as soon as they arrived at Huday- biyyah, about two farsakhs (about 12 km) from Makkah, the Quraysh took sides to prevent the entry of the Muslims; this, although it was in the forbidden month, when in accordance with the law of Jahiliyyah (period of pre-Islamic ignorance in Arabia), even the Quraysh did not have the right to deny them admittance.
The Prophet (PBUH&HF) explained that he did not mean to do anything other than to make a pilgrimage to the Ka'bah and that he meant to return home after completing his pilgrimage.
The Quraysh disagreed.
The Muslims demanded leave to enter Makkah by force, but he refused in order not to show disrespect for the Ka'bah.
The Quraysh and the Muslims, finally agreed to sign a peace treaty.
The Prophet (PBUH&HF) dictated the peace treaty to 'Ali (AS) who wrote it down.
The Prophet (PBUH&HF) ordered him to write: In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.
Suhayl ibn 'Amr, representing the Quraysh, protested and said: This is your slogan, with which we are not familiar.
Write: In your name,O Allah! The Prophet (PBUH&HF) agreed and ordered 'Ali (as) to write accordingly.
Then, the Prophet (PBUH&HF) ordered him to write: This is a contract being concluded between Muhammad, Allah's messenger and the Quraysh.
The representative for the Quraysh objected saying: We do not regard you as Allah's messenger.
Only your followers regard you likewise.
If we had regarded you as Allah's messenger, we would not have fought against you, nor had barred your entry to Makkah.

Write your and your father's name.
The Prophet (PBUH&HF) said: Whether or not you regard me as Allah's messenger, I am Allah's messenger.
Then, he ordered 'Ali (AS) to write: This is a treaty being concluded between Muham- mad ibn 'Abdillah and the people of Quraysh.
It was at this point that the Muslims became angry.
From this point on, the historical accounts differ in certain respects.
From Ibn Hisham's "Sirat Ibn Hisham" and also from Sahih Al-Bukhari (Bab Shurut fi Al-Jihad wal-Musalahah ma'a Ahlal-Harb), it can be concluded that this objection was made before the words "Allah's messenger" were written, where- upon the Prophet (PBUH&HF) agreed immediately to have "Muhammad ibn 'Abdillah" written for "Muham- mad, the Allah's messenger".
Yet, it can be con- cluded from most accounts that the objection was made at a time when 'Ali (AS) had already written the words.
The Prophet (PBUH&HF) then requested 'Ali (AS) to erase the words, whereupon 'Ali (AS) requested to be excused from doing so.
Here, again the texts differ.
The Shi'a ahadith 's texts agree that upon 'Ali's (AS) expressed refusal to erase the sacred words, the Prophet (PBUH&HF) him- self erased the words, in place of which 'Ali (AS) wrote "Muhammad ibn 'Abdillah".
In these texts and in certain Ahl al-Sunnah ahadith's texts, there is an explicit reference to the fact that the Prophet (PBUH&HF) requested 'Ali (AS) to show him the words by placing his hand on the words so that he might erase the words with his own hands.
'Ali (AS) did so and the Prophet (PBUH&HF) erased the words "Allah's messenger" with his own hand.
Then, 'Ali (AS) wrote "ibn 'Abdillah", instead.
Therefores it was 'Ali (AS) who did the writing and not the Prophet (PBUH&HF).
Rather,in accordance with both Shi'i accounts, and those of the Ahl al-Sunnah the Prophet (PBUH&HF) neither read nor wrote.
In the book entitled: "The Stories of the Qur'an", written in Persian in the 5th Century (Hijrah) by Abu Bakr 'Atiqi Nayshapuri who adapted the work from his own exegesis of the Qur'an, the author relates the Hudaybiyyah event up to the point where Suhayl ibn 'Amr, on behalf of the Quraysh, objected to the words "Allah's messenger".
Suhayl ibn 'Amr said The Prophet said to 'Ali to erase "Allah's messenger".
' Ali disinclined to do this and felt uneasy at the Prophet's insistence.
Then the Prophet said to 'Ali; Put my finger on the words so that I may erase them.

Since

Allah's messenger was untaught, and did not know how to write, 'Ali placed the Prophet's finger on the words and the Prophet erased the words as Suhayl ibn 'Amr meant.

Al-Ya'qubi too, in his book: "Tarikh al- Ya'qubi" writes: "The Prophet ordered 'Ali to write "Ibn 'Abdillah" in place of "Allah's messenger".
Having written "'Ali refused to erase the words", in "Sahih Muslim", Muslim writes: The Prophet said to 'Ali to show him the words.
'Ali did likewise whereupon the Prophet erased the words and wrote Muhammad ibn 'Abdillah.
In this statement, on the one hand, Muslim writes: "The Prophet sought 'Ali's help to erase the words", and on the other hand, he writes: The Prophet erased the words and wrote.
It might appear that the Prophet wrote after erasing the words, but the writer of the statement means that 'Ali did the writing, for the text of the statement reads that the Prophet sought 'Ali's help to erase the words.
It fo'llows explicitly from "Tarikh al-Tabari" and "Kamil Ibn al-Athir" and Al-Bukhari's account under the chapter: "Al-Shurut" that the second word was written by the Prophet (PBUH&HF) himself.
It is on record that The Prophet (PBUH&HF) took the pen from 'Ali's hand and wrote himself.
In Al-Tabari's and Ibn al-Athir's statements, there is an additional sentence: "Allah's messenger took the pen from 'Ali's hand and while it was not proper for him to write, he wrote.
" Al-Tabari's and Ibn al-Athir's accounts confirm that the Prophet (PBUH&HF) would not write, but that he did write exceptionally in Hudaybiyyah.
This may confirm the view of those who observe that under divine instructions he could have written had he so wished; he never composed a poem nor recited anyone else's.
If he ever wished to recite a couplet, he would utter it in prose form, disordering and adjusting the words to achieve this end; for Allah (SWT) would deem poetry below his dignity: And We haue not taught him poetry, nor is it suitable for him; it is nothing but a reminder and a plain Qur'an (36:69).
As is seen, the accounts on the Hudaybiyyah event do not tally.
However, despite the fact that it can be concluded from certain accounts that the words "ibn 'Abdillah" - an integral part of the Prophet's signature-would have been written by the Prophet (PBUH&HF), these very accounts also confirm that this was exceptional.
In the book entitled: "Usud al-Ghabah", under the details regarding Tamim ibn Jarashah al-Thaqafi the author quotes a story about him, which suggests that even in the course of his prophethood, the Prophet (PBUH&HF) neither read nor wrote.
He narrates: I, along with a group of people from Thaqif, met the Prophet and embraced Islam.
We requested him to sign an agreement with us and agree to our terms.
The Prophet ordered us to write whatever we desired and then bring it to him to see.
We requested for permission to practise usury and adultery.
As we were unable to put it into writing, we visited 'Ali ibn Abi Talib for the purpose.
Seeing that we had such terms to include, 'Ali refused to write.
We made the request to Khalid ibn Sa'id ibn Al-'As.
'Ali enquired from Khalid whether or not he knew what he had been requested to do.
Khalid replied: "It does not concern me what it is.
I will write whatever they will tell me.

Once the writing is brought to the Prophet's atten- tion, he will know what to do therewith". Khalid wrote the matter down and we took it to the Prophet who ordered someone to read it. The reader had scarcely uttered the word "usury", the Prophet asked him to place his finger on the word which he erased with his own hand and recited from the Qur'an: "O believers! Practise taqwa (fear Allah) and giue up usury.

" On hearing this verse we were imbibed with refreshed faith and assurance whereupon we resigned not to take usury.

The reader continued reading till he uttered adultery whereupon again, the Prophet having had his hand placed on the word recited from the Qur'an: "Do not indulge in adultery, for surely it is an open indecency".

ProphetTaken fromThe Un-schooled Prophet
By Allama Murtaza Mutahhari

Chapter II.

The Adversaries Accusation

It was mentioned at the very beginning of the book that: "The opponents of Islam and the Prophet (PBUH&HF) accused him of borrowing ideas from others (this accusation is reflected from some verses of the Qur'an). But they did not say that he was literate and knew how to read and write and that he perhaps had some books which he consulted before presenting his views." Someone might, however, claim that the Prophet (PBUH&HF) was accused in this respect too. This accusation is reflected from the Qur'an where it says: They say: The stories of the ancient he has got them written down - so that these are recited to him morning and evening (25:5) The answer is that this verse does not explicit- ly indicate their claim that the Prophet (PBUH&HF) used to write, regardless of the fact that the opponents' accusations were so prejudiced and based on com- plexes and grudges that, as the Holy Qur'an puts it, only terms like "injustice" and "oppression" can best be used for them. At the same time, the Arabic term "iktitab" means both "to write" and "istiktab" i.e to make someone write something. Here, the second meaning applies to the verse which would mean "They said: 'He has written (or others have written for him) the stories of the ancient, then someone reads to him every morning and evening," "Iktitab" is mentioned here in the past tense and "imla'" in the present continuous. It implies that someone wrote them, and that those who knew how to read, used to come to Prophet (PBUH&HF) every day and night and read them to him, and that he learned and memorized them. Thus, if the Prophet (PBUH&HF) knew how to read, they would not necessarily say that others used to read to him day and night; rather, it would suffice them to say that he himself referred to writings and memorized them. Therefore, even the oppressive and accusing infidels of his time, who accused the Prophet (PBUH&HF) in many ways and named him an insane, a sorcerer, a liar and an imitator of others' oral statements, etc, could not claim that he read the contents of other books to them due to his inability to read and write.

ProphetTaken fromThe Un-schooled Prophet
By Allama Murtaza Mutahhari

Chapter III.

Conclusion

It is inferred from what has already been stated that according to the definite testimony of history, Qur'anic proofs and abundant indications deduced from the history of Islam, the Holy Prophet's (PBUH&HF) mind was untouched by human teaching. He was a man taught only in the divine school and who received his knowledge from Him alone. He was a flower fostered by the Pre-eternal Gardener and none else.

Although Allah (SWT) has nothing to do with the pen, paper, ink, reading and writing, He swore by the pen and its manifestations as a sacred mat- ter in His Holy Book:

Nun' I swear by the pen and what they write Quran (68:1).

Allah (SWT) also commanded "reading" in His first heavenly message and introduced the knowledge and art of using the pen as the greatest blessing bestowed on man after the blessing of "creation". The Holy Qur'an states:

Read in the name of your Lord Who created. He created man from a clot. Read and your Lord is Most Honourable; Who taught (to write) with the pen; taught man what he knew not (96:1-5).

In fact, the one who had not held a pen in his hand, established the "Pen Movement" immediate- ly after his arrival in Madinah by providing simple facilities. Although he had neither been tutored by man nor had he attended any universities or the like, he turned out to be man's teacher and the founder of universities. Hafiz. remarks:

Brightened and made Heaven's grace manifest, He healed our wandering heart and our wounded chest.

He, who attended no school, was dear of mine,

Hundreds of tutors were taught with his knowledge, divine.

And his graceful glance filled the lovers with spirits raised, The knowledge and wisdom both got amazed.

Imam 'Ali al-Rida (AS), in his discussion with the people following other religions, addressed Ra's al-Jalut:

Among the true reasons of his prophethood is that the Prophet was an orphan, a poor shepherd and a worker who had not read any books and had not been taught; yet, he brought a book in which there are the stories of prophets and the information regarding both past and future generations.

What reveals more reasonably the loftiness, grandeur and heavenliness of the Holy Qur'an is the fact that this great divine Book, with myriad instructions concerning the creation, the Resur- rection, human beings, morality, law, admonitory stories and sermons-with all its grace, beauty and eloquence-was issued from the tongue of the one who was himself unlettered, who neither attended any school or college nor received any university education and who neither met any of his contem- porary scholars nor read a simple book of his time.

The sign and miracle that Allah (SWT) granted to His last Prophet (PBUH&HF) was the book and writing, of speech and meditation, and of feelings and senses. It deals with wisdom, thoughts, the heart and mind. This Holy Book has shown for centuries, and still shows, its extraordinary spiritual authority. The passage of time cannot make it obsolete. It has fascinated, and continues to fascinate, millions and millions of hearts. It brims over with a life-sustain- ing power. What thoughtful minds it has induced to meditation! What numerous hearts it has over- flown with spiritual enthusiasm! What countless nightingales of dawn and those keeping a night vigil it has spiritually fed! What tears it has caused to flow on cheeks at midnight out of love for Allah (SWT) and fear of Him. And what enslaved and chained nations has it emancipated from the claws of tyranny and despotism.

The poet says:

As the Qur'an's seal shone all and every- where, The Pope's plans it shattered and of the Magi's here and there.

Let's open what I really feel in essence, It is not a simple book but has a difference. It transforms into whosoever's soul it enters, Like the transformed soul, the world also alters.

It is clear like "truth", but hard to reach, Alive, everlasting, a manifest speech.

Yes, to enlighten more clearly that the Qur'an is a revelation and a miracle for the human beings Allah (SWT), the Everlasting Grace, revealed it to one among His servants who was an orphan, a poor shepherd and a desert-rover and an untaught and unschooled man.

That is Allah's grace; He grants it to whom He wills, and Allah is of abounding bounty (62:4).